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SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

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EAP FOR AMBASSADOR HASLACH
DOE FOR OFFICE OF NUCLEAR ENERGY/MCGINNIS
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SUBJECT: METI PREVIEWS MINISTER NIKAI'S U.S. TRIP

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Summary

11. (SBU) Minister of Economy, Trade, and Industry Toshihiro Nikai will visit New Mexico, Chicago, and Washington during a May 1-6 trip to the United States. Trip details, and the substance of proposed MOUs to be signed, are coming together quickly. In Washington, Nikai plans to see Energy Secretary Chu, USTR Kirk, and Commerce Secretary Locke. The main purpose of the trip, said METI officials, is to advance the agreement the President and PM Aso reached in February to promote environmental and energy cooperation. A preview of Nikai's agenda in each meeting is included. METI officials note Nikai seems more subdued following recent press reports that suggest his involvement in a political fund-raising scandal. End summary.

Stops in New Mexico, Chicago

12. (SBU) Ministry of Economy, Trade, and Industry (METI) Minister Toshihiro Nikai will stop in New Mexico, Chicago, and Washington during a May 1-6 trip to the United States, METI Americas Division Director Yasushi Akahoshi told emboffs April 28. Details are still under discussion both within the Ministry and with U.S. partners, stressed Akahoshi, but the trip is coming together quickly and its outlines are now set.

13. (SBU) Nikai will land in Albuquerque the evening of May 1 and stay until the morning of May 3. During the times he plans to attend a series of meetings involving New Mexico's high-level research institutions, including Sandia National Laboratory and Los Alamos National Laboratory. Akahoshi said Minister Nikai may have a dinner with scientists from the institutions on the evening of May 1 or lunch with them May 12. He will also visit the Center for Integrated Nanotechnologies (CINT) branch laboratory at Sandia.

¶4. (SBU) While in New Mexico, Nikai will meet Governor Richardson to sign "some kind of Memorandum of Understanding between METI and the State of New Mexico." Asked about the MOU, Akahoshi stated New Mexico is interested in promoting "smart grid" technologies and that about 30 Japanese business people and METI officials had participated in a smart grid conference in early April. From that idea, and with text from a sample MOU one of METI's bureaus had signed in the past with New Mexico, a broad, conceptual MOU is being rapidly drafted.

¶5. (SBU) On May 3, Minister Nikai will make a short stop in Chicago en route to Washington. There he plans to meet several Japanese members of the law firm Sidley Austin, some of whom are former colleagues of the President and the First Lady. The meeting has been arranged, said Akahoshi, by a lawyer named Tomoo Nishikawa, whose wife, Akira Matsu, is a Diet member who was METI Deputy Minister during the Koizumi administration. Afterwards, Nikai will proceed to Washington and a dinner with Japanese Ambassador Fujisaki.

Washington Meetings

¶6. (SBU) Minister Nikai plans to see U.S. Trade Representative Kirk and Department of Energy Secretary Chu May 4 and Department of Commerce Secretary Locke on May 5. He will also have dinner with members of the Japanese business community May 4.

¶7. (SBU) Akahoshi stated the Minister's primary purpose in
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Washington will be "to materialize the agreement made between Prime Minister Aso and President Obama in February to promote environmental and energy cooperation." He said METI hopes to use Nikai's meeting at DOE to sign an MOU between officials from the U.S. National Laboratories and Japan's Advanced Institute of Science and Technology, but that who would sign the MOU and its specific content were still under discussion. Asked, he suggested the MOU would be in the field of energy and the environment and offered fuel cell, solar, and carbon capture and storage technologies as possible areas of collaboration.

¶8. (SBU) Japan's Atomic Energy Agency (JAEA) President Toshio Okazaki may accompany Nikai on his U.S. trip, said Akahoshi, but a final decision has not been made. Akahoshi said Okazaki's presence would be in a "social" capacity. (Note: According to Yutaka Sagayama of the JAEA, METI agreed to Okazaki's participation and is now seeking approval from the U.S. End Note.)

¶9. (SBU) Regarding Nikai's meeting with Commerce Secretary Locke, Akahoshi noted the U.S. and Japan had reached broad agreement on a joint initiative on patent cooperation, but that it did not appear an agreement on specific language could be reached in the short time left before Nikai's visit; this meant there could be no deliverable associated with that topic during the trip. METI is interested, he added, in enhancing cooperation with the National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST).

¶10. (SBU) Turning to Nikai's meeting with USTR Kirk, Akahoshi stated the Minister would likely discuss ways in which Japan and the U.S. can resist protectionism in the current global economic situation, as well as ways to advance the Doha Development Agenda. He will also likely touch upon APEC's agenda under successive Japanese and U.S. leadership but do so without offering new or specific ideas on how to cooperate. Nikai, continued Akahoshi, would appreciate hearing USTR Kirk's thoughts on how to move forward on bilateral, regional, and multilateral trade arrangements and is also interested in the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) and Chinese information technology security standards. In explaining the Minister's talking points, however, Akahoshi cautioned that while METI's Americas Division has

drafted Nikai's briefing papers, it has not had the chance to present them to the Minister and receive his feedback.

¶11. (SBU) Asked about bilateral trade issues, Akahoshi said METI expects USTR Kirk to raise beef and insurance, but that Minister Nikai is not planning to present Japanese trade issues for discussion. He also does not intend to raise METI's report to WTO Director General Lamy concerning global protectionist trends (ref).

Nikai's Political Standing

¶12. (SBU) Akahoshi declined to comment on how the ongoing money and politics scandal involving Nishimatsu construction, including the possible implication of Minister Nikai, is affecting the mood within METI. Another METI official, however, told emboffs that Nikai in recent weeks has become more subdued and approachable, and is not as "aggressive" as he had been in past meetings. It is as though, said the official, Nikai does not want to lose the support of METI's rank and file.

ZUMWALT